

**OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES TRADE REPRESENTATIVE
EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
WASHINGTON, D.C.
20508**

USTR PRESS RELEASES ARE AVAILABLE ON THE USTR HOME PAGE AT WWW.USTR.GOV.

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
APRIL 10, 2000**

**00 -27
CONTACT: BRENDAN DALY
AMY STILWELL
TODD GLASS
(202) 395-3230**

**U.S. - Hungary Conference on Trade Promotes WTO, Economic Growth
in Southeast Europe**

On April 5 and 6, the United States and Hungary jointly sponsored a conference for their trading partners in Southeast Europe to promote a working partnership on trade, the importance of WTO membership and its close link to economic reform in Southeast Europe.

“The United States and the Hungarian Government led this conference because both believe that membership and full participation in the WTO are absolutely essential to the region’s economic development,” said United States Trade Representative Charlene Barshefsky. “It was instructive to hear first hand from these countries of how vital WTO membership is to their economic expansion and future growth.”

This conference was a key element of the United States’ commitments to the countries of Southeast Europe under the Southeast Europe Trade Expansion Initiative announced at the Sarejevo Summit in July 1999. The seminar was designed to demonstrate how WTO standards create a stable environment for economic growth, foster free market economic reforms, and enhance member countries’ ability to attract investment. In addition, a primary goal of the conference was to exchange ideas on how both current and prospective members can operate effectively within the WTO to advance their economic interests, and to promote regional cooperation on reducing barriers to trade and investment, consistent with transparent, predictable international rules and norms.

The U.S. delegation, led by Deputy United States Trade Representative Susan Esserman, was joined by high-ranking officials from co-host Hungary and eight Southeast European countries, including some of those most economically devastated by the conflict in Kosovo: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Moldova, Romania and Slovenia.

All of the participating countries demonstrated a firm commitment to economic reform and

strongly stated the significant role that WTO members have played in furthering this goal. Deputy Prime Minister of Bulgaria Peter Jotev stated: “We believe that the participation of high-ranking officials from the United States, Hungary, and eight countries of Southeast Europe, as well as from the WTO Secretariat, provides an excellent opportunity to exchange views and ideas on how to maintain a stable environment for economic growth in the region, on how future cooperative initiatives could be developed, and on how WTO membership can contribute to fostering economic reform and attracting foreign investment.”